

February Water Board Report

Highlights from the Feb. 3, 2026 meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board, held online.

Congratulations to OBWB Chair Blair Ireland and Vice- Chair Doug Holmes on their unanimous re-elections for the 2026 term:

Director Blair Ireland was acclaimed as OBWB Chair for 2026, marking his third term as OBWB Chair. Appointed to the OBWB by the Regional District of Central Okanagan (RDCO), Chair Ireland also serves as the Co-Chair of RDCO and as Mayor of Lake Country.

OBWB Director Doug Holmes was acclaimed as OBWB Vice-Chair for 2026, also marking his third term. Vice-Chair Holmes is appointed to the OBWB



by the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen, and also serves as Mayor of Summerland.



73% of Okanagan boat launch users aware of Don't Move A Mussel campaign:

Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society Executive Director Lisa Scott highlighted just how much coordinated effort goes into keeping the Okanagan free of invasive mussels. Of the 1,073 watercraft surveyed at 15 Okanagan boat launches, 94% said they had stopped at a B.C. inspection station before launching, and 73% said they were aware of the OBWB's [Don't Move A Mussel](#) campaign. Scott underscored that continuing to keep

B.C. waters invasive mussel-free will need trusted local engagement and stable funding, noting: *"Each year the invasive mussel threat gets closer."*

Half of mussel-fouled boats were on their way to the Okanagan in 2025:

OBWB Chief Operating Officer James Littlely reported that the recent provincial Invasive Mussel Defence Program (IMDP) Update confirmed that of the six total mussel-fouled boats intercepted in 2025, three were headed to the Okanagan, emphasizing the seriousness of the threat and validating OBWB's ongoing advocacy. The program inspected 27,100 watercraft, including 319 considered high-risk. Provincial staff also performed 170 decontaminations. High compliance rates (92.2%) and expanded 2026 monitoring priorities are encouraging, but continued engagement with Federal and Provincial government is needed to secure funding and get regulatory safe guards into place before it is too late.



[Read the 2025 IMDP Report](#)

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Planning begins for the 20th Anniversary of the Water Management

Program: Executive Director Melissa Tesche noted that 2026 is the 20th anniversary of the OBWB's Water Management Program. In lieu of the traditional fall annual meeting, the OBWB will host an event to celebrate 20 years of collaborative water management—highlighting impacts, innovation, and regional leadership that have occurred under the program. The celebration is planned for Friday, June 5, 2026. More details will follow soon.



Okanagan local government and utilities staff continue to value OBWB's Make Water Work and Don't Move a Mussel campaigns:

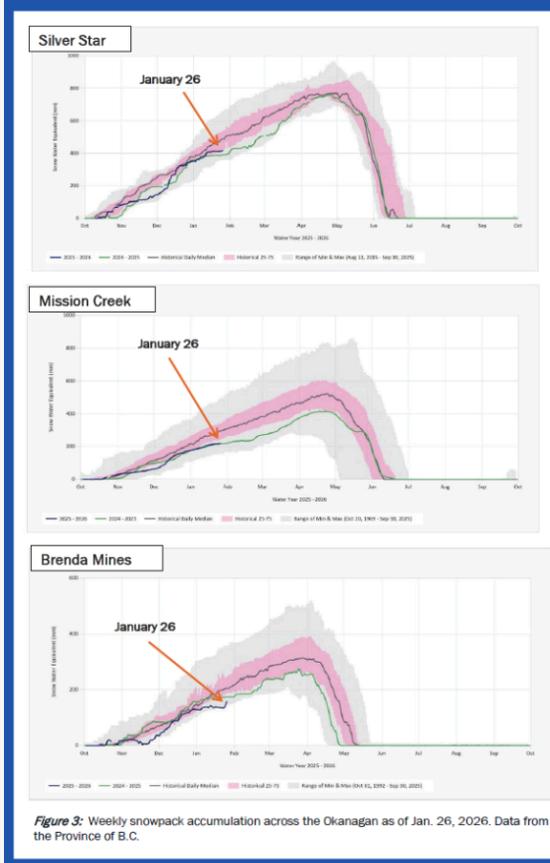
The OBWB Communications Manager Carmen Weld provided the Board with a synopsis of feedback from local government staff on OBWB's two central communication campaigns. Meetings were held with sixteen of the program's local government and utilities partners, who emphasized the importance of countering the persistent "myth of

abundance," and highlighted strong support for the campaigns' multi-pronged approach that has included social media, billboards, digital ads, and radio and TV outreach.

Partners also praised the revised drought bulletins, noting that they help reinforce consistent regional messaging. Both outreach campaigns and the drought bulletins are scheduled to continue in 2026.

Okanagan remains dry: The Okanagan remains in a long-term dry pattern, with January showing below-normal precipitation and snowpack still lagging below normal across most monitoring sites. As of Feb. 1, 2026, the Okanagan's

snowpack sits at just 81% of normal, reinforcing ongoing drought concerns. Despite a recent cold snap, seasonal forecasts point to warmer- and wetter-than-normal conditions through March, offering some potential relief but likely not enough to erase multi-year drought conditions. OBWB will continue closely tracking snowpack, lake levels, and streamflows, as early-season data will be critical for spring water-supply planning.



Want to support our goal to educate residents on water in the Okanagan? Follow us on social media, like and share our content, and leave us a comment — your engagement helps us reach more people.



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Okanagan Basin Water Board 2026 DIRECTORS



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Regional District of
Central Okanagan



Doug Holmes - Vice-Chair
Regional District of
Okanagan-Similkameen



Brian Guy
Regional District of
North Okanagan



Bob Fleming
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Rick Fairbairn
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Kevin Kraft
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Sue McKortoff
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Tim Lezard
Okanagan Nation Alliance



Bob Hrasko
Water Supply
Association of B.C.



Sheena Spencer
Water Stewardship Council

Resources

